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C O N F I D E N T I A L SARAJEVO 001849

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DEPARTMENT FOR G:JFERRAO AND S/P: KVOLKER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/28/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [BK](#)
SUBJECT: BOSNIA: PROMOTING DISCUSSIONS OF THE COMPLEMENTARY
NATURE OF ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY

REF: SECSTATE 116583

Classified By: DCM Judith B. Cefkin. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1. (C) Per reftel, post recommends the following individuals as possible Bosnian interlocutors on the complementary nature of Islam and Democracy:

Government Officials and Political Leaders:

- Sulejman Tihic, former Bosniak member of the Presidency and current president of the Party for Democratic Action (SDA). As former President and political successor to the late Alija Izetbegovic, Sulejman Tihic enjoys considerable political influence among the Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) electorate. In October, 2006, Tihic lost his reelection bid to Bosniak nationalist Haris Silajdzic. Since that time he has been under pressure to accommodate extremist voices within his party and Bosnian Islam in general. For the most part, Tihic has been successful in withstanding those pressures but, as a result, is unlikely to be willing to adopt a public stance critical of Islamist Bosniaks at this time. Nonetheless, Tihic is a political reformer who remains committed to a secular state and an adherent of the tolerant and European-oriented tradition of Bosnian Islam.

- Jasmin Imamovic, Mayor of Tuzla Municipality. Mayor Imamovic is a popular mayor well known for his multiethnic approach to governance. He often hosts discussions on interreligious dialogue and ethnic tolerance and is a political moderate. Although Mayor Imamovic is a Bosnian Muslim, he is extremely secular in his approach to his role as an elected official.

- Mr. Hillmo Neimarlija, Delegate in the House of Peoples of the Bosnian Parliament, Professor at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences.

Public Intellectuals:

- Mr. Resid Hafizovic, Professor at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences. Professor Hafizovic published several editorials warning against the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Bosnia and the attendant threat to traditional Bosnian Islam. Although he received widespread public support and started a long overdue debate on the issue, he was admonished by the Islamic Community for his outspoken views. As a result, Professor Hafizovic has since retreated from public view and has been reluctant to discuss controversial issues. Post does not anticipate that he would be willing to play a prominent public role within Bosnia on the subject of democracy and Islam, but he would likely be a willing and engaging participant at events outside of the country.

2. (C) The following Bosnian Islamic scholars have outlined

legal Islamic frameworks that support the concept of democracy within Islam and illustrations of the Prophet Muhammed's support for democratic principles. All the individuals are also alumni of Post's Fulbright Program:

- Mr. Ismet Busatlic, Dean-elect at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences
- Mr. Fikret Karcic, Professor of Law at the University of Sarajevo and Faculty of Islamic Sciences
- Mr. Nevad Kahteran, Professor of History at the Faculty of Philosophy
- Ms. Zilka Spahic-Siljak, Lecturer in Comparative Religion at the University of Sarajevo

13. (C) The following NGOs support initiatives that highlight the compatibility of Islam and democracy:

- Interreligious Council (IRC) of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo
- International Multi-Religious and Intercultural Center, Sarajevo
- "Eyes to Eyes" (Oci u Oci) Interreligious Service, Sarajevo

14. (C) On August 29, Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs Ambassador Nedžad Hadžimusić told post that the Bosnian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received an invitation from the government of Mali to attend the Community of Democracies ministerial. Ambassador Hadžimusić stated that, while no decision had been taken, it was currently unlikely that the Bosnian government would decide

in favor of high-level attendance. He added, however, that this would change if the USG formally requested Bosnia's participation.

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